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NEWS UPDATE

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August 21, 2003

Surratt's Engineer Declines to Make Written Comments Mitchell Building Has Cracks and Charred Timbers

Tuesday, August 19

Building Code Administrator Steve Landrith reviewed and denied the demolition plans for the Polycraft building submitted by the Hughes' engineer Mark Peters, citing among other reasons, the lack of safeguards to the adjacent Surratt and Mitchell properties. He then notified property owners Jeannette Surratt and Billy Mitchell along with Jackson Zorn, the engineer representing Mrs. Surratt, of his decision.

Mr. Zorn informed the City that Mrs. Surratt's attorney had instructed him not to provide written comments on the Hughes proposed demolition plan. Building Code Administrator Steve Landrith had tried to obtain a copy of a letter which he understood Mr. Zorn was going to write to his client, explaining current conditions of the Surratt and Mitchell buildings. However, Mr. Zorn said he has "not been directed as of this date to provide a written assessment" of the properties. (A copy of the letter is available.)

Wednesday, August 20

Tad Boland, an independent structural engineer retained by the City, entered the Surratt and Mitchell buildings to assess their condition and to look at options for stabilizing the buildings at the time of demolition.

Today, Thursday, August 21

Tad Boland provides an oral report indicating that the Mitchell building has three sheer cracks on the south wall which go all the way through the wall. He notes that they have been patched with some filler but they have not been repaired. He also notes that the Mitchell building has horizontal wooden beams at the lower level which show evidence of being charred from a fire some time in the past. Additional supports were positioned under them at the same time but they have not been replaced.

Steve Landrith meets at the Polycraft building with the Hughes' structural engineer Mark Peters and representatives from D. H Griffin Co., specialists in building demolition, to discuss alternative methods for demolishing the unstable structure. However, the Polycraft building shows worsening signs of collapse and the demolition company expresses skepticism on the viability of the Main Street properties.

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